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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT WEDNESDAY, March 15, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEW FOR FOOD SHOPPERS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A, and the Consumers' Counsel, A.A.A.

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Once again the news is for the lady who goes a-marketing.....news about prices and supplies of seasonal foods to help you buy wisely.

Usually food costs go down during March. The latest predictions about prices this month are that eggs, butter, cheese, better-grade beef, new potatoes, and most green vegetables are going down. But sweetpotatoes, old potatoes, onions, apples, oranges, grapefruit, poultry, port and lower-grade beef are going up.

The fruit news right now centers on oranges and other citrus fruits, and on strawberries and pineapples.

February windstorms in California did considerable damage to oranges and lemons. But the crop is so large that these storms probably won't make much of a dent in supplies. Just before the windstorms the crop report indicated a record orange production not only in California but also in Texas and Florida....all three orange-growing sections, you see. If the California crop should be cut considerably you won't notice it until June anyway. Up until June plenty of oranges from other sections will be on the market. But from June through September most of the oranges come from California.

So much for oranges. Now about strawberries. Jack Frost played a mean trick on everyone who was hoping for lots of strawberry shortcake early in the season. Louisiana berries will be late starting to market this month because of freeze damage. Fortunately only the berries froze.....not the plants. Louisiana is the largest individual strawberry-producing State and ships berries to market from March through May.

Pineapples are coming into market, too, these days.....coming in from Puerto Rico. Throughout May shipments of pineapple will be heavy.

Turning now to the vegetables on the market, the three buys of the month are asparagus, broccoli and artichokes. Asparagus season opens in March. Broccoli and artichokes are usually more plentiful in March than in any other month.

Here are a few guides to help you choose these green vegetables. The best asparagus has close compact tips and stalks so tender that they puncture easily. Freshness is most important when you buy asparagus, because as soon as these green steams are cut, they begin to age and toughen. As for artichokes, the most desirable ones are compact and heavy, yield slightly to pressure, and have tightly clinging scales of a good green color. Best-quality broccoli has tender and firm stalks, compact buds in clusters, and is a dark or purplish green depending on the variety. If the bud clusters are open and show yellow or purple blossoms, the plant generally is overmature and tough.

So much for news of fruits and vegetables. Now some tips on meat, poultry, eggs and butter.

You won't find so much fresh pork on the market this month as in February, or as there was a year ago, for that matter. During March the last part of the spring pig crop goes to market. This year most of the pigs were marketed earlier in the spring so there are smaller supplies of pork on hand right now. But the total supplies of pork in the country still are larger than they were last year.

As for poultry and eggs, the predictions are that markets will have more of both than a year ago. Prices of eggs are moving down seasonally while poultry is going up.

The last shopping tip for today is about butter. Ordinarily as more butter comes on the market in March, butter prices go down. But the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation has been buying butter this year and has kept the price relatively staple. The low point in butter prices usually comes in summer.

Now to sum up all this news: Your buys in fruits this month are oranges and other citrus fruits, strawberries and pineapples. Oranges are still low in price but expected to go up shortly. As for vegetables, broccoli and artichokes are plentiful and usually at their bottom price this month. Asparagus season is starting. At the meat market, remember that better-grade beef is getting cheaper while poultry and pork and lower-grade beef will cost more. Finally, eggs and butter are going down in price.

As every good housewife knows, buying food wisely is only half the story. Preparing and cooking it well is quite as important. So now may be the time to send for bulletins to help you make the most of these spring foods. You are welcome to the Department of Agriculture's leaflet on cooking eggs as long as the supply lasts. Write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. for Leaflet No 39 called "Eggs at Any Meal." Once more, Leaflet No. 39 called "Eggs at Any Meal." Then, to make the most of the better-grade beef which is getting cheaper in price, you may want a leaflet on cooking beef. Write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. for Leaflet No. 17 called "Cooking Beef according to the Cut." Both the egg leaflet and the beef leaflet are free as long as the supply lasts.

That concludes the food-shopping tips for today. More in two weeks.

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